

Crisis Intervention for Yourself and Others

The American Psychological Association (2003) outlined the Resilience Mode: “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress, such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors.”

Make connections: Good relationships with close family members, friend, or others are important. Assisting other can provide social support, help with reclaiming hope and also can benefit the helper.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems: You can’t change the fact highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events.

Accept that change is part of living: Certain goals may no longer be attainable. Accepting circumstances cannot be changed helps focus on those that can.

Movement toward goals: Development of realistic goals, and doing something regularly. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, asking oneself, “What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?”

Taking decisive actions:rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses, and wishing they just go away.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery: Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of personal strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for their life.

Nurturing a positive view of oneself: Developing confidence in one’s ability to solve problems and trusting one’s instinct helps build resilience.

Keeping things in perspective: Try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and maintaining a long-team perspective. Avoiding blowing the event out of proportion.

Maintaining optimism: Visualize what one wants, rather than worrying about what one fears.

Taking care of oneself: Engaging in activities that one enjoys and finds relaxing. Exercising regularly. Taking care of oneself keeps the mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Psychological First Aid

Psychological First Aid (Raphael, et al., 1996) is a basic human response of comforting and consoling a distressed person; protecting them from further threat or distress, as far as is possible; furnishing immediate care for physical necessities: providing goal orientation and support for specific reality based tasks (“reinforcing the concrete world”); facilitating reunion with loved ones; some allowance of some telling of the “trauma story” and ventilation of feelings as appropriate for the particular individual; linking the person to systems of support and sources of help that will be ongoing; facilitating the beginning of some sense of mastery in what they do; and identifying the need for further counseling or intervention.

King County Critical Incident Stress Management Team: 24-7 Activation

253-372-1400

The King County CISM Team is comprised of mental health professionals and emergency services peers who have training and experience in assisting persons affected by critical stress events. Different events and circumstances determine different responses. A CISD does not replace the actions of other support resources.

Other Resources

Referral to a Counselor who specializes with Emergency Services Professionals

Your Agency’s Peer Support Team

Your Agency’s Chaplain Program

Your Agency’s Employee Assistance Program

Seattle/King County Crisis Clinic
206-461-3222 ~ 1-800-244-5767

King County EMS – CISM Program

Ronald W. Quinsey, PM, Program Manager

999 Third Avenue – Suite 700

Seattle, WA 98104-4039

206-296-4693 FAX 206-296-4966

www.metrokc.gov/health/ems/cism.htm

Stress Management Principles for Emergency Services Professionals



*King County Emergency Medical Services
Critical Incident Stress Management Program*

Helping The Helper Help



Stress is Natural

Stress can be both a necessary and potentially harmful part of living. Managing stress come from understanding and practice. Professional assistance is needed when stress becomes overwhelming and unmanageable.

Stress is an unavoidable part of life. We need enough stress (*Eustress*) to keep us motivated to accomplish things in our lives, e.g. bills we need to pay motivates us to go to work, boredom motivates us to take up activities. It can be debilitating if it becomes chronic and if we don't have the resources or skills to handle it. Too much stress (*Distress*) can overload us and cause a variety of emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual reactions; if left unresolved (*Chronic Stress*) can, in affect, disable us and contribute to our death.

Hans Selye, PhD, considered by many as the father of the study of stress, developed the idea that there is a direct relationship between chronic stress and excessive wear and tear throughout the body. It is believed that Americans suffer from chronic stress related diseases and contributes to early death, e.g. cardiovascular diseases.

Sympathetic Response

Increased Heart Rate, Blood Pressure, Respiratory Rate
Muscles tenses
Brain is more simulated
Liver increases blood glucose level
Digestion inhibited
Pupils dilate (increases vision)

Parasympathetic Response

Reduces Heart Rate, Blood Pressure, Respiratory Rate
Muscles relax
Energy (nutrition) is stored
Promotes growth and re-energizes cells
Mediates and calms the psyche
Pupils constrict

Signs/Symptoms of Stress

PHYSICAL

Appetite - weight changes
Headaches*
Tension / fatigue
Increasing colds*
Muscle aches*
Rash*
Foot or finger tapping
Increased alcohol use
Increased drug use
Increased tobacco use

INTELLECTUAL

Forgetfulness
Poor concentration
Dull senses / lethargy
Stuttering
Low productivity
Negative attitude
Confusion
Loss of creativity
Continuous daydreams
Boredom

EMOTIONAL

Anxiety
Mood swings
Depression
Frustration
Apathy
Short temper
Nightmares
Crying spells
Irritability
Easily startled

RELATIONAL

Feeling isolated
Intolerant of others
Resentful / nagging
Loneliness
Lashing out
Marriage problems
Social withdrawal
Lowered sex drive
Lack of intimacy
Anti-social behavior

SPIRITUAL

Feeling empty
Doubt in religious or spiritual beliefs
Feeling unforgiven
Spiritually lonely
Looking magic
Loss of life purpose
Cynicism about life
Needing to prove self-worth

Build a Stress Management Foundation

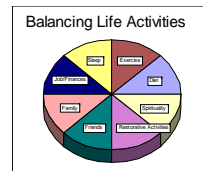


Daily stress reduction skills will make it easier for your body, mind and emotions to return to normal, and more quickly. Daily stress reduction activities cement relaxation memory into your body. A personal habit of stress reduction reminds the body to remain relaxed during stressful times. Without the experience of daily relaxation, the nervous system encounters more difficulty reaching a relaxed state. Persons with high stress lifestyles or jobs are unable to reach a completely relaxed state because they lack the experience of complete relaxation.

When a critical incident occurs the nervous system crashes and eventually returns to the state of chronic stress rather than to a relaxed state.



‘Life happens!’ There will always be an occasion where an area of your life goes out of balance, i.e. an unexpected financial burden, domestic or job troubles. If the areas of your life are in balance you will experience more stability and better able to handle the crisis. A balanced lifestyle allows you to better handle life's ups and downs. When there is conflict in families having friends and work provides a chance for support, changing the focus for a while and allow regeneration time.



The Wheel of Success: Diet, Physical Exercise, Sleep, Job/Finances, Family, Friends, Restorative Activities, Spirituality & Belief Systems are and wellbeing. Possessing balance in your life, as much as possible, will allow you to handle stress better and maintain emotional, psychological, mental and physical wellbeing.

Incident Specific Stress

Emergency services personnel are exposed to a wide variety of critical events throughout their career. Most adapt or become desensitized to the kind of calls they respond. Some don't adapt, the stress builds and then they leave the profession or channel the effect in an unhealthy manner.

Daily Stress Management Helps In Critical Stress Events

As you progress in your career it is imperative that you develop mechanisms that reduce the daily stress and ways to get assistance when your normal mechanisms don't work. In critical incident situations your normal stress management techniques fail to work.



What is critical to one person is different to another. Some will respond more to a death of a child especially if they have children, while others will respond to specific sights or smells they experienced at the scene. It is important that you do not compare your responses to others.

Your response is your response!

Critical Incident Stress

‘Any incident faced by emergency services personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later. All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of type, generates unusually strong feelings in the emergency workers.’

Jeffrey Mitchell, Ph.D. (former firefighter/paramedic developer of the CISM model)

Factors that make events more likely a critical incident:

- Human caused events elicit stronger feelings/reactions than natural disasters or freak events; unusual sights, sounds, or smells. Night events increase perceptual distortions.
- Events which are life-threatening to the worker. Large number of victims and/or toxic exposures or health risks.
- Events that violate the worker's sense of how the world should be... for example, disasters on holidays.
- Death of children, teens, young parents. Freak natural occurrences involving common objects.
- Events drawing high media coverage or in pressure of being observed.
- Death of a co-worker or another rescue worker, especially line-of-duty; or, just knowing victims in an incident.